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# The Town of Fluvanna

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## *The Town of Fluvanna*

Fluvanna was Shangri-La when I was a boy,  
high on a mesa off the road. The highway  
twisted past boulders and cactus canyons,  
a painted desert where cowboy movies  
were shot. During World War Two,  
my father never swerved, driving an old Ford  
fast to visit family. My sister teased,

seeing me stare, in love with lies  
she whispered about mansions, that name  
a mystery to my flat Texas ears—  
*Fluvanna*. After Saigon, my wife and I  
moved back to dry hardscrabble plains.  
We passed those signs at eighty miles an hour,  
our children howling in the back seat,

eager to see the beach. Last month,  
my wife and I slowed down and crossed  
the culvert, the winding, country road  
like a washboard, potholes unpaved  
for decades, loose gravel pinging. And there,  
at the top, Fluvanna, a farm town  
with dogs and elms and a Dairy Queen,

the state road the only street  
through town, except alleys with shacks.  
We didn't see the far side of the moon,  
only the same flat plains. One old couple  
rocked in the shade, on their porch swing.  
We found tricycles and bikes, a schoolhouse,  
a farmer swirling eight gold rows of dust.

*by Walter McDonald*

